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ACTION EA 19

INFO NSCE 00,CIAE 00,SSO 00,DODE 00,USIE 00,NSAE 00,CCO 00,S

IO 21,SP 02,SS 35,GPM 03,SC 01,NSC 10,RSC 01,P 04,INR 07,SAH

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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RELEASE DENY
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O R 291138Z AUG 67 ZFF1
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5621
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3986
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG 829
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2323

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. TRAN VAN HUONG AND RUNNING-MATE MAI THO TRUYEN HELD WELL ATTENDED PRESS CONFERENCE MORNING AUGUST 29 AT CONTINENTAL HOTEL. HUONG BEGAN BY READING PREPARED STATEMENT WHICH MADE FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS: (1) CAMPAIGN HAS PROCEEDED NORMALLY IN SPITE OF GREAT DISCREPANCY BETWEEN MEANS AVAILABLE TO THIEU/KY AND OTHER PRESIDENTIAL SLATES, "A DISCREPANCY OBVIOUS TO ALL"; (2) PRESSURE AND INTIMIDATION BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES AGAINST CAMPAIGN WORKERS OF CIVILIAN SLATES HAS DECLINED AS

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A RESULT OF DENUNICATIONS BY HUONG AND OTHER CANDIDATES; (3) SIMPLE FACT THAT PRESSURE TACTICS HAVE BEEN REDUCED DOES NOT MEAN ELECTIONS WILL BE ENTIRELY HONEST "BECAUSE INTIMIDATING

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CAMPAIGN WORKERS ONE THING, CHEATING IS ANOTHER". ON LATTER SUBJECT BEHAVIOR OF AUTHORITIES ON ELECTION DAY ITSELF WILL HAVE TO BE WATCHED BEFORE PASSING JUDGEMENT. ONE CONCERN IS NUMBER OF ALLEGATIONS THAT MILITARY PERSONNEL BEING ISSUED TWO VOTING CARDS. HUONG URGED ELECTORATE IN GENERAL AND POLL WATCHERS IN PARTICULAR TO BE VIGILANT AND CONSCIOUS OF IMPORTANCE OF ELECTIONS. HE URGED CIVIL SERVANTS TO "FOLLOW DICTATES OF THEIR CONSCIENCES IN ORDER TO INSURE THE HONESTY OF THE ELECTION"; (4) HUONG ALSO APPEALED FOR UNITY AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT ELECTIONS WOULD BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO UNITE RATHER THAN FURTHER DIVIDE THE NATION. HE APPEALED FOR UNITY BETWEEN VIETNAMESE FROM NORTH, SOUTH AND CENTER; UNITY BETWEEN RELIGIOUS; AND UNITY BETWEEN THE ARMED FORCES AND THE PEOPLE. HUONG EMPHASIZED THAT HE HIMSELF HAD ALWAYS BEEN GUIDED BY OVERALL INTERESTS OF THE NATION AND NOT REGIONAL OR RELIGIOUS PREJUDICES; AND HE DEPLORED FACT THAT SOME VIEW ELECTION AS CIVILIAN/MILITARY CONTEST.

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THIEU AND KY ARE RUNNING IN CAPACITY AS INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS AND NOT AS CANDIDATES OF THE ARMED FORCES. THUS PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST IS NOT BETWEEN CIVILIANS AND MILITARY BUT BETWEEN "WORTHY AND UNWORTHY VIETNAMESE COMPETING FOR LEADERSHIP OF COUNTRY"; AND (5) HUONG CONCLUDED THAT, IF ELECTIONS HONEST, WORTHY MEN WILL NO DOUBT BE ELECTED CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITY TO SOLVE BASIC PROBLEMS OF COUNTRY AND RESTORE PEACE. IF ELECTIONS NOT HONEST, " THEN THE PRESENT DETERIORATING SITUATION WILL DRAG ON AND LEAD TO TOTAL COLLAPSE."

2. AFTER READING PREPARED STATEMENT AND BEFORE OPENING FLOOR TO QUESTIONS, HUONG TOLD AUDIENCE THAT RUMORS OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING TO EFFECT THAT IF ELECTED HE WOULD APPOINT AN TRUONG THANH PRIME MINISTER. HUONG SAID RUMORS ARE UNTRUE AND POSSIBLY PROMOTED BY THOSE WHO WISH TO CREATE IMPRESSION THAT HE (HUONG) IS SOUTHERN REGIONALIST. SINCE BOTH HE AND MAI THO TRUYEN SOUTHERNERS, HUONG ADDED, HE COULD ASSURE LISTENERS THAT HIS PRIME MINISTER WOULD NOT BE A SOURTHERNER. HUONG AGAIN EMPHASIZED BELIEF THAT ONLY MEASURE OF A MAN IS HIS TALENT AND PATRIOTISM

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NOT HIS REGIONAL ORIGIN.

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3. ENSUING QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD LASTED APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR. VIET NAM PRESS REPORTER ASKED HUONG IF HE HAD PROOF THAT MILITARY PERSONNEL BEING ISSUED MORE THAN ONE VOTING CARD. SAME CORRESPONDENT ALSO ASKED IF HUONG WOULD COOPERATE WITH THIEU/KY GOVERNMENT IF LATTER ELECTED. HUONG REPLIED THAT HE HAD ADEQUATE EVIDENCE OF UNFAIR ELECTION PRACTICES. IF COMMISS N FORMED TO INVESTIGATE ELECTION, IT WILL BE SUPPLIED WITH E.IDENCE. MAI THO TRUYEN INTERRUPTED WITH LENGTHY REVIEW OF WHAT HE CONSIDERED UNFAIR ADVANTAGES ENJOYED BY THIEU/KY SLATE DURING CAMPAIGN. HE LABELED PM KY'S MAY 28 CAMPAIGN VISIT TO HUE IN SPECIAL DC-6 AND USE OF HELICOPTER TO GO FROM PHU BAI AIRFIELD TO JOINT CAMPAIGN APPEARANCE WITH OTHER CANDIDATES AS "CLEAR VIOLATIONS OF ELECTION LAW." AS FOR VOTING CARDS, TRUYEN SAID EVIDENCE EXISTED THAT SOME MILITARY PERSONNEL PSSESS AS MANY AS THREE CARDS; AND, TRUYEN ADDED, IN CAMPAIGN APPEARANCE AT RACH GI HE HAD PROMISED TO MAKE EVIDENCE AVAILABLE IF PRIME MINISTER WOULD PUBLICLY ASSURE SAFETY OF THOSE WHO COME FORWARD WITH THE FACTS.

4. IN REPLY TO QUESTION REGARDING POST-ELECTION COOPERATION

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WITH THIEU/KY, HUONG REITERATED PREVIOUS PULBIC STATEMENT THAT HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER UNDER THIEU/KY. "I HAVE MY PROGRAM, THEY HAVE THEIR'S AND I WILL NOT ACCEPT PREMIERSHIP TO CARRY OUT POLICY OTHER THAN MY OWN."

5. WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENT ASKED HUONG IF HE THOUGHT ADDITIONAL U.S. TROOPS SHOULD BE ASSIGNED TO VIET NAM. HUONG REPLIED THAT THIS IS MILITARY MATTER UPON WHICH HE IS NOT AT THE MOMENT QUALIFIED TO COMMENT. REPLYING TO ANOTHER QUESTION FROM SAME CORRESPONDENT, HUONG REITERATED VIEW THAT

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SETTLEMENT TO WAR MUST BE NEGOTIATED BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH VIET NAM AND NO ONE ELSE. ALLIES SHOULD, OF COURSE, BE CONSULTED THOROUGHLY IN ADVANCE. AS FOR NLF, EVEN THOUGH IT CONTAINS SOME TRUE NATIONALIST ELEMENTS, IT IS COMPLETELY RESPONSIVE TO ORDERS OF HANOI. THUS "WE CANNOT NEGOTIATE WITH NLF." HUONG ALSO SAID THAT TIME NOT YET RIPE FOR NEGOTIATIONS, THAT GVN MUST NEGOTIATE FROM POSITION OF STRENGTH, AND THAT TO NEGOTIATE NOW COULD MEAN MAKING UNACCEPTABLE CONCESSIONS TO THE COMMUNISTS.

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5602
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3987
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG 830
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2324

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

6. CORRESPONDENT FROM SONG MOI ASKED HUONG WHAT HE THOUGHT OF INVESTIGATION OF 50 ARVN OFFICERS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED BY THIEU. MOI THO TRUYEN REPLIED THAT TIMING OF THIEU'S ANNOUNCEMENT SUS- IZCT AND HE SPECULATED THAT THIEU/KY SLATE USING INVESTIGATION AS PRESSURE TACTIC TO ASSURE ARVN SUPPORT FOR THEIR SLATE. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY, SAID TRUYEN, WAS THAT THIEU AND KY ATTEMPT G TO DIVIDE ARMY SO AS TO CREATE J
FFICULTIES FOR FUTURE
CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD THIEU/KY SLATE LOSE.

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7. NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENT ASKED HUONG IF HE PLANNED TO MAKE EVI.

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DENCE OF ELECTION FRAUD VAILABLE TO U.S. AND AUSTRALIAN OBSERVER DELEGATIONS. HUONG ANSWERED THAT THE NEED FOR INVITING FOREIGN ELECTION OBSERVERS WAS A "HUMILIATION" FOR THE VIETNAMESEM HE QUESTIONED POTENTIAL EFFECTIVENSYS OF SUCH OBSERVERS AND SPECULATED THAT SECURITY AND TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS WOULD BE OBSTACLE TO MEANINGFUL OBSERVATION. HUONG SAID HE WAS NONETHELESS PREPARED TO MAKE ANY EVIDENCE OF FRAUD AVAILABLE TO FOREIGN DELEGATIONS AND TO U.S. CONGRESS AS WELL. HUONG CORRECTED HIMSELF SEERAL MOMENTSXLATER CLAIMING THAT HE HAD MEANT TO SAY THE VIETNAMESE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND NOT U.S. CONGRESS.)

8. JAPANESE NHK CORRESPONDENT ASKED HUONG WHY HE WASNUT WITHDRAWING FROM RACE IF HE THOUGHT THERE WAS LIKELIHOOD OF ELECTION FRAUDM HUONG REPLIEDNHAT HE HAD ONCE TOLD A FRIEND HE WOULD RATHER WITHDRAW THAN LET HIS PRESENCE IN RACE SERVE AS COVER FOR FRAUDULENT ELECTION. NOW, HUONG SAID, HE REALIZED THAT HIS WITHDRAWAL WOULD DISAPPOINT HIS MANY FOLLOWERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND, IN EFFECT, WOULD BE A BREECH OF TRUST. "THUS I SACRIFICE MY PERSONAL HONOR TO AVOID REPROACH FROM

THOSE WHO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN ME."

9. IN REPLY TO ANOTHER QUESTION, HUONG SAID IT WAS HARD TO JUDGE HOW MANY VOTES HE WOULD ACTUALLY GET. MAI THO TRUYEN FOLLOWED UP ON SAME QUESTION BY STATING THAT IN VIET NAM THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF VOTERS - THOSE IN SAIGON AND THOSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. TRUYEN MAINTAINED THAT RURAL POPULATION NOT POLITICALLY AWARE, DOES NOT APPRECIATE SIGNIFICANCE OF ELECTIONS AND "WILL VOTE FOR THE MAN WITH A MUSTACHE" IF INSTRUCTED TO DO SO. FRAUD WILL BE GREATEST. TRUYEN WENT ON TO CLAIM, IN REMOTE RURAL AREAS. ON OTHER HAND, IN SAIGON DGREE OF POLITICAL AWARENESS IS HIGH, AS IS VOTER RECOGNITION OF VARIOUS SLATES AND THERE IS MUCH LESS LIKELIHOOD OF ELECTION RIGGING. THUS, "TRUE" PICTURE OF ELECTION RESULTS WILL BE REFLECTED IN SAIGON BALLOTING.

10. TRUYEN WENT ON TO VOICE SUSPICION REGARDING SHARP IN-

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CREASE IN VOTER REGISTRATION BETWEEN FIRST AND
SECOND POSTING.
TRUYEN SAID HE "IDN'T BELIEVE THAT APPROXIMATE INCREASE OF
400,000 VOTERS COULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO INCREASED GVN CONTROL
OF COUNTRYSIDE. INSTEAD, HE CLAIMED, IT REFLECTS INTENSIFIED
GVN REGISTRATION EFFORTS IN "REMOTE VILLAGES" AND, TRUYEN CON-

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CLUDED ."EVERYONE KNOWS HLORE THOSE VOTES WILL GO."

11. WASHINGTON STAR CORRESPONDENT ASKED HUONG IF HE FORESAW
POSSIBILITY OF POST-ELECTION COOPERATION BETWEEN TWO LEADING
SLATES SHOULD WINNER RECEIVE, FOR EXAMPLE, THIRTY-FIVE PERCENT
OF VOTE AND RUNNER-UP RECEIVE THIRTY. HUONG RESTAUD VIEW THAT
EACH SLATE HAS ITS OWN PROGRAM AND LIKELY TO WANT ITS OWN
PEOPLE TO CARRY IT OUT. HUONG CONCEDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE
WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER POSSIBILITY OF POST-ELECTION
COOPERATION IF WINNERS ARE COOPERATIVE.

12. FINAL QUESTION POSED BY CORRESPONDENT FROM TIA SANG
WHO ASKED IF, WHEN FORMING HIS GOVERNMENT IN 1964,
HUONG HAD RECEIVED AND SUBSEQUENTLY REJECTED LIST OF PERSONS
PROPOSED AS MINISTERS BY THICMTTAM CHAU. HUONG REPLIED THAT
HE HAD, THAT HE WAS STILL IN POSSESSION OF THE LIST AND WAS
PREPARED TO MEET THE PRESS JOINTLY WITH TAM CHAU TO EXPOSE
IT. (NOTE: TAM CHAU HAS PUBLICLY DENIED EXISTENCE OF SUCH
LIST.)

13. COMMENT: (A) EMBOFF DISCUSSED PROPOSED CONTENT IN
PRESS
CONFERENCE WITH HUONG ADVISOR VO LONG TRIEU EVENING AUGUST
28. TRIEU OUTLINED POINTS HUONG INTENDED TO MAKE, EMPHASIZED

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THAT CONFERENCE WOULD BE "FREE OF SURPRISES" AND THAT IT WAS
INTENDED AS A LAST GENERAL PRE-ELECTION CONTACT WITH THE PREUE.
ACCORDING TO TRIEU, MAJOR POINT THEY WISHED TO MAKE AT CONFER-

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ENCE WAS THAT HUONG WAS NOT SOUTHERN SEPARATIST AND THAT HIS APPEAL WAS NATION-WIDE.

(B) HUONG'S STATEMENT THAT PRESSURE TACTICS AGAINST HIS CAMPAIGN WORKERS HAVE DECLINED AND INCREASED EMPHASIS BY BOTH HIMSELF AND THUYEN ON IMPORTANCE OF HONEST VOTE COUNT REFLECTS IN OUR VIEW LOGICAL SHIFT IN CAMPAIGN TACTICS, WITH CAMPAIGN VIRTUALLY OVER. HUONG UNDOUBTEDLY FEELS THAT IMPORTANT QUESTION UPON WHICH TO FOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION NOW IS PROPRIETY OF BALLOTING ITSELF.

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